

EI-883

LINA (ANGELINA) GALLO PIZZO
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ITALY, 1910
AGE 5
PASSAGE ON "THE KOENIG ALBERT"

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SIGRIST: Good afternoon. This is Paul Sigrist for the National Park Service. Today is Thursday, May 15, 1997. I'm in Linden, New Jersey, and I'm here with Mrs. Angelina Pizzo. Mrs. Pizzo came from Italy in 1910. She was five years old at that time. We are in her home. Present also is her niece, Beatrice Mezzacappa, and I'll spell that. That's Capital M-E-Z-Z-A-C-A-P-P-A, and her daughter, Carol Mezzacappa. Anyway, thank you for letting me come. Can we begin by you giving me your birth date?

PIZZO: Yes. My birth date is March 5, 1905.

SIGRIST: And where in Italy were you born?

PIZZO: In Naples.

SIGRIST: You were born in the city of Naples.

PIZZO: Right.

SIGRIST: Wow. Um, do you know anything about the day you were born?

PIZZO: Hardly.

SIGRIST: (he laughs) Did your mother or father ever tell you a story about what happened the day you were born?

PIZZO: No. No, I don't recall anything like that.

SIGRIST: I see. Um, were you born at home or in a hospital?

PIZZO: At home. Nobody went to the hospital then, as far as I know.

SIGRIST: Did you live in the same place until you left Italy, in the same . . .

PIZZO: I have to say yes, although I can't substantiate it, but I do know that my grandmother and several aunts lived with us at the time, my father's sisters.

And . . .

SIGRIST: What was your maiden name?

PIZZO: Gallo.

SIGRIST: Can you spell that, please?

PIZZO: G-A-L-L-O.

SIGRIST: Okay. Well, this would be a good time to talk about your father, since you've mentioned him. What was his name?

PIZZO: His name was Giuseppe.

SIGRIST: Giuseppe.

PIZZO: In other words, Joseph.

SIGRIST: What do you know about your father's family background?

PIZZO: Well, as far as the background is concerned, very little, except what I observed at the time we were living with them. I know that we had a beautiful house. To me it was beautiful. We had a terrace at the end of which they kept chickens. Why, I don't know. But the chickens were there at all times. And

I had a mania for watching the chickens, and when the eggs were coming out, I helped them along. I kept pulling the eggs out. This I do remember.

SIGRIST: Pulling the eggs out of the chickens.

PIZZO: Right. And, uh . . .

SIGRIST: What else do you remember about the house?

PIZZO: I remember about the house, about the name, and I remember standing on the balcony and a parade of people were in the street. There was a parade going on. What it was about, I can't tell, but I waved and yelled like everybody else. This is as far as my living with the family is concerned. I don't think I can recall anything else.

SIGRIST: Do you remember how many rooms the house had?

PIZZO: As far as I know, there was this big dining room, and my grandmother sat in this rocking chair at all times. And the only thing I do know, I can't remember any other rooms. That was the only room I can remember, and I do remember that my mother was cooking one day and ran out of parsley. So she told my aunt we have to get some parsley. Well, to me parsley was green.

My grandmother had a dress, a skirt, that had green flowers on it. I got a scissor and as she was sitting there I was in the back of the chair and I kept cutting the green parsley out of her skirt. And I brought it to my mother, and naturally I was punished.

Oh, another thing I remember, the now what comes to me, there was no central heating, naturally, so they used these pans with hot coals in them to keep the house warm. I remember those hot coals, and I remember my mother saying, "Don't go near that." This is about all I can recall.

SIGRIST: Well, you're doing well. (he laughs)

PIZZO: You think so?

SIGRIST: Tell me, do you remember where you slept at night in the house?

PIZZO: No, but I can tell you where I slept when we were aboard ship.

SIGRIST: Well, we'll get to the ship soon. We've got to get you out of Naples first. Do you remember, tell me what you remember about your grandmother. This is your father's mother?

PIZZO: Yes.

SIGRIST: Yes. Describe your grandmother for me. What sticks out in your mind about her.

PIZZO: Well, that she always sat in this rocking chair with this big flowered skirt, as I said, with all the parsley on it.

SIGRIST: Do you remember her name?

PIZZO: I think I was named after her.

SIGRIST: So you think she was Angelina?

PIZZO: Yeah, I'm not sure, but I think I remember my mother saying once that I was named after her.

SIGRIST: Can you tell me how she and your father got along.

PIZZO: Oh, hardly, hardly, because my father was an army man, and I don't ever remember seeing him around the house, except one night I do remember he was dressed, they were going out, my mother and he. He had a derby. My mother had a beautiful dress on with this big hat with feathers and everything. And they came in, yeah, now I remember where I was sleeping, in a crib, in a crib. And they came to wish me goodnight, and as my mother

bent over the crib to kiss me, the votive candle that they had at the end of my crib, her, the feathers on her hat caught fire, and I remember this fire blowing.

Yeah. That's right. My mother's head seemed to be all in fire. That's about all I can remember.

SIGRIST: Why was there a candle at the end of the crib?

PIZZO: Because they were religious, and there was a saint's, statue of a saint with the votive candle in front of it. And that was right at the end of my crib.

SIGRIST: What religion were you?

PIZZO: Catholic.

SIGRIST: Catholic. Were there any other religious objects in any other part of the house?

PIZZO: I can't remember.

SIGRIST: But you do remember that.

PIZZO: I do remember that, because my mother's hat just went up in flames.

SIGRIST: You mentioned, we'll get back to your father for a minute. You mentioned that he was in the army, or was

an army man, a military man.

PIZZO: Yeah.

SIGRIST: And that he wasn't around a lot.

PIZZO: Right.

SIGRIST: Can you describe for me your father's personality?

PIZZO: I know he had what they call Kaiser Bill moustache.
He always wore a derby when he was home.

SIGRIST: You're saying Kaiser Wilhelm? Is that what you said,
the moustache?

PIZZO: A Kaiser Bill moustache.

SIGRIST: Kaiser Bill, a Kaiser Bill moustache. Yeah, like a
handlebar moustache.

PIZZO: Right.

SIGRIST: Uh-huh. I see.

PIZZO: Right. We used to call them Kaiser Bill moustache,
because the Kaiser at that time had one of these
moustaches.

SIGRIST: That's right, he did.

PIZZO: And, uh, that's it, honey.

SIGRIST: Before you left Italy, do you ever remember doing something with your father, the two of you?

PIZZO: No, no. I can't recall.

SIGRIST: Do you know anything about him being in the military?

PIZZO: Very little, very little. I, I have to go on now to the time that we left Italy. He wanted to see America. I had, my mother's sister was here with her husband, and he arranged a leave of absence, rather he arranged to take a leave of absence for a year to come to America, because he was thrilled and wanted to see what America was like.

SIGRIST: A leave of absence from the army?

PIZZO: Right.

SIGRIST: Do you know what army, what the name of the . . .

PIZZO: I think I have some stuff there.

SIGRIST: Maybe not. Okay, well, we can look after, we can look after the interview.

PIZZO: I don't know the name.

SIGRIST: That's okay. That's all right.

PIZZO: But I may be able to find it.

SIGRIST: What was your mother's name?

PIZZO: Assunta.

SIGRIST: Can you spell that, please?

PIZZO: A-S-S-U-N-T-A. That was her first name. And Cerase,
which means cherry, was the last name.

SIGRIST: Can you spell that, please?

PIZZO: C-E-R-A-S-E.

SIGRIST: Thank you. What do you know about your mother's
background, where she came from, and her growing up?

PIZZO: Nothing. I can honestly say, nothing.

SIGRIST: Were your parents, even later, in America, were your
parents inclined to talk about their past with their
children?

PIZZO: No. The short time that we were in America, no. I
never remember my mother talking. Even later on as I

got older I never remember her talking about it.

SIGRIST: All right. They kept that to themselves.

PIZZO: Um, more or less. The only thing I ever did hear my mother say is that she had a sister who died very young. And she was devoted to this sister, and she felt very bad, but that's as far as it went. She never said anything else.

SIGRIST: Do you ever wish that they talked more about their background?

PIZZO: Yes, but maybe I'm getting ahead of myself. But my mother had all she could do to bring up two children in a foreign country, not knowing the language, so I'm sure that all she could concentrate on, how she was going to keep a job, to earn money, to get us to grow up properly. We spent very little time with my mother for the simple reason that she worked all day. We went to what they called a nursery, like a day care center that they have today. We went there early in the morning, and we came home about seven o'clock at night, after my mother got through working she'd come for us. So actually there was no contact during the day, mother and daughter. That's the reason, I guess,

for not, for her not talking to me or my sister.

SIGRIST: This is very important information about how the generations related to each other.

PIZZO: Yeah, well . . .

SIGRIST: Or how they didn't relate to each other. Yeah.

PIZZO: We didn't relate simply because there was no time. At seven o'clock at night when I was with, say, six, seven, even eight, a child is tired. She's ready to go to bed, right? My mother would give us our supper, put us to bed, and then she would have her supper. So where was the contact. It was impossible.

SIGRIST: Right, right. Let's get you back to Italy before we get you any deeper into America. When you were a little girl in Italy, do you remember any games that you played?

PIZZO: Uh-uh. No.

SIGRIST: Do you remember celebrating a holiday of some sort in Italy?

PIZZO: Well, the only holiday was, as I told you, when we were out on the balcony and the parade was coming

down, and then everybody was waving and yelling, so I waved and yelled. I didn't know what I was doing, but I did the same thing the grown-ups did.

SIGRIST: Did you have a toy that was very dear to you?

PIZZO: Yes, I did. And, uh, I had a rag doll that I took with me everywhere. Now, what happened is . . .

SIGRIST: Where did you get the rag doll?

PIZZO: Well, I guess my parents gave it to me. This was prior to my father dying. But the night that he was dying, I was in the bedroom. The doctor was there. And my mother, my father was foaming at the mouth. So the doctor was looking for something he could use to dry up the foam. He took my rag doll, tore off the skirt, and sort of tried to wipe the foam from my father's face. But my father died that night. And I was so hurt that he had torn my rag doll. I cried, you know what I mean? Because that's the only toy that sticks with me.

SIGRIST: How old were you when your father died?

PIZZO: He died nine months after we came to America. I was, I might have been six, or less than six.

SIGRIST: I see, I see. So soon after you got here.

PIZZO: Oh, yeah.

SIGRIST: Okay.

PIZZO: We were only here nine months when he died.

SIGRIST: All right. Well, we'll talk about that, then, coming up. Do you remember getting ready to leave Italy?

PIZZO: No, no.

SIGRIST: What about preparations that your mother had to make for you to leave Italy?

PIZZO: I had no way of knowing. I mean, I might have seen her make preparations, but I didn't know.

SIGRIST: Do you have any recollection of what the family took to America? What did you pack to take, if you remember.

PIZZO: I don't remember, but we couldn't have taken much, because we were supposed to be going back.

SIGRIST: Oh, tell me about that. That was the intention?

PIZZO: Oh, yeah. We were on vacation, or rather my father

was on vacation, and we came to America to be with him. But, uh, when he died my mother decided her sister was here, she had very, very few family members left, so she decided to stay in America.

SIGRIST: I see. Did your father, did you come over to the United States with your father, or was he already here?

PIZZO: Yes, no.

SIGRIST: You came as a family.

PIZZO: We came as a family.

SIGRIST: And you mentioned that you have another sibling, that there were two children.

PIZZO: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Who is the, who is that?

PIZZO: Well, she is now dead. That's, uh, my niece's mother.

SIGRIST: Beatrice, who's in the room with us.

PIZZO: Beatrice. Her name was Beatrice.

SIGRIST: Her name was Beatrice. Was she older or younger than

you?

PIZZO: Younger, two years younger.

SIGRIST: Uh-huh. So she was born in Italy, though?

PIZZO: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Yes, two years younger. Um, what do you remember about going, where did you have to go to get on the ship?

PIZZO: Uh, Naples, there was a port in Naples.

SIGRIST: And did you have to do anything before you got on the ship, that you can remember?

PIZZO: I can't remember.

SIGRIST: Okay.

PIZZO: I don't, you know . . .

SIGRIST: Well, you were a little girl, so, you're doing a great job.

PIZZO: Bad enough I can remember these things.

SIGRIST: These are wonderful things you're remembering. Um, do you remember being on the ship?

PIZZO: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Okay. Tell me what you remember. First of all, let's, tell me the name of the ship. You just looked up on your papers.

PIZZO: I just told you . . .

SIGRIST: Right. The Koenig Albert.

PIZZO: Koenig Albert.

SIGRIST: K-O-E-N-I-G, Albert. The King Albert, yes. And, um, what do you remember about being on the ship?

PIZZO: I remember when we went to bed at night climbing the ladder. Evidently we had bunk beds, and I thought it was wonderful that I had to climb the ladder to get to sleep. Then I remember standing, now, it had to be when we got to Ellis Island, because my father was holding me by the hand, my mother had my sister. All of a sudden, there's a vendor selling bananas. And my father bought us bananas. And for the first time in my life I ate a banana. And a banana has never tasted the same since, I enjoyed it so. I remember that, and I remember more waving. Evidently when we saw the

Statue of Liberty or whatever it was, maybe we waved before, because how did the vendor get on the ship?

SIGRIST: Well, the vendor may have been, as you say, at Ellis Island.

PIZZO: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Do you remember being on the deck of the ship?

PIZZO: Not particularly, no.

SIGRIST: You mentioned climbing up into a bunk.

PIZZO: Yeah.

SIGRIST: What were the sleeping arrangements. Were all of you, how were you all . . .

PIZZO: No, my sister and I were in the upper bunk, and my dad and my mother were below.

SIGRIST: What, did your grandmother and your aunts stay in Naples?

PIZZO: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Do you remember saying goodbye to your grandmother or to your aunts?

PIZZO: No. I can't remember that.

SIGRIST: I didn't, I didn't even ask you before, is there a recollection you have about one of your father's sisters who lived in the house with you?

PIZZO: Nothing except that she used to write to my mother.

SIGRIST: One of the sisters did?

PIZZO: Yeah, after my father died, and that's about all I can remember, because my mother used to read the letters to me, but I don't know what she read, what they meant.

SIGRIST: Do you know how long it took the ship to get from Italy to New York? No. Do you remember any other children on the ship?

PIZZO: No. That's just it. I don't. Oh, I do remember one other thing. My mother was very happy one day, and she kept saying the reason was that we had been invited to the captain's table. My mother and my father, what, I don't suppose we were there because I don't remember the layout, but I know my mother raved about being invited to sit at the captain's table. I found out later that the captains do that, right? Or

did, at one time.

SIGRIST: Sometimes, yeah. Do you remember eating on the ship at all, or where you . . .

PIZZO: Only the banana.

SIGRIST: Only the banana. Right. Okay. All right. So the ship comes to New York.

PIZZO: Right.

SIGRIST: And you mentioned the story about the banana vendor, probably at Ellis Island.

PIZZO: Yep.

SIGRIST: Do you remember anything else about being at Ellis Island? Did someone come and meet you?

PIZZO: Oh, yes. Well, evidently, because my aunt and uncle were here, I told you, we were coming to visit them, so they must have come. Although I do not recall.

SIGRIST: Where did your uncle and aunt live?

PIZZO: In Brooklyn.

SIGRIST: In Brooklyn.

PIZZO: What they call McCaren Park, or used to call McCaren Park. It's in the Greenpoint section of Brooklyn.

SIGRIST: And what did your uncle do for a living?

PIZZO: He was a painter on carriages. He made all the beautiful figures and flowers and stuff on carriages. At that time it was a horse and carriage, and he decorated these carriages. He was really artistic.

SIGRIST: Do you remember your uncle's name?

PIZZO: Yeah, Joseph. Giuseppe.

SIGRIST: Uh-huh. And do you remember your aunt's name, his wife?

PIZZO: Uh, yeah.

SIGRIST: Yes, Beatrice?

BEATRICE: That's the name.

SIGRIST: Beatrice?

PIZZO: Yeah, her name was Beatrice also. That's right.

SIGRIST: (he laughs) Thank you. Do you remember going to their house when, when you first got to New York?

PIZZO: Yeah, I do remember going into, they lived, what I later found out, were flats in Brooklyn. The used to have these houses. You went in the one door. On this side was an apartment, on this other side was another apartment, and they were railroad rooms, One right after the other. I remember that distinctly. Now, I tell you why I remember it, maybe I'm getting ahead of my story.

SIGRIST: No, this is good. Go ahead. No, go right ahead.

PIZZO: Because when my father died, they decorated the entrance to the apartment in yards and yards and yards of purple satin and black satin. Purple and black were supposed to mean someone had died, and they, they kept, I don't know, nailing it apart, all around the entrance. And that stayed there, I think for a whole month.

END OF SIDE ONE

BEGINNING OF SIDE TWO

SIGRIST: Is that where you lived when you first got to the . . .

PIZZO: That's where we lived.

SIGRIST: You lived with your uncle and aunt.

PIZZO: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Did they have children?

PIZZO: No.

SIGRIST: No. Do you, what do you remember about living with your uncle and aunt when you first got here, what the conditions were, and who did what?

PIZZO: Well, after a while the conditions were not good because my mother had her own ideas, my uncle had his ideas, and my aunt was in the middle. So there was friction. I do remember friction. Then we moved from this house that we originally went into into another house on Graham Avenue.

SIGRIST: Graham Avenue.

PIZZO: Graham.

SIGRIST: Graham.

PIZZO: And, uh, we lived over Atrunge's[ph] Meat Market. We lived on the first floor. And there was friction, still friction.

SIGRIST: So when you moved, you all moved, your uncle and aunt.

PIZZO: Yeah, yeah.

SIGRIST: Everybody. And your father's dead at this point, yes?

PIZZO: My father's dead.

SIGRIST: And there was still, even though you moved to a new place, there was still friction.

PIZZO: There was still friction until one night, it was pouring rain. The friction got so bad my uncle said, "Out!" And out we went. My mother and the two of us, she's holding us, pouring rain. We had no umbrellas. We're all crying. We were walking along, my mother didn't know where to go. Luckily she met a friend who was a minister. I think it was a Baptist minister. And when he saw us he asked my mother what had happened. To make a long story short, he took us home to his house on Manhattan Avenue, and we stayed with his wife and children, he had children, for a while until my mother could find a place to live. And luckily in the backyard was a house with only two rooms. My mother rented that and no gas, no electric. We had kerosene lamps. I remember the kerosene

lamps. And we lived there for, uh, quite a while until my mother was able to rent another place which was closer to the nursery school that we had originally gone to.

SIGRIST: I see. So that first amount of time, when you get to America, your father dies, and then things are not good living with your uncle and aunt, and then you end up having to move. So things are, things are unstable that first amount of time that you're here.

PIZZO: I just thought of something.

SIGRIST: What? Go ahead.

PIZZO: And I think you should know about it. When we, when my father was still alive and we had moved in with my aunt, in order to get to this nursery because my mother naturally had to work and she was able to get a job where my aunt was working, so my father had to take care of us during the day until he could get located. We had to go through a lane where they brought cattle to the slaughterhouse. You asked me if I remembered anything more about my father. It just came to me. He would walk with us and when we'd hear the mooing of the cows that were coming, he'd push us

up against a building, stand in front of us, open his coat, and try to hide us from the cattle because we wore little red riding hood capes in red, and my father was afraid (she laughs) the cows would probably come after us, you know? But I remember going through this lane that was originally a cow lane because the slaughterhouse was not too far away from the nursery where we went. And they had to go through this lane.

SIGRIST: Could we talk a little bit about your father and why he died. What happened that led to his death?

PIZZO: Just a heart attack as far as I know.

SIGRIST: And this is, what did you say, sixty?

PIZZO: He was only thirty-nine years of age.

SIGRIST: And you had been here how long? Six months, you said?

PIZZO: Well, no. Nine months.

SIGRIST: Nine months.

PIZZO: He died nine months after we got there.

SIGRIST: Well, what do you remember about the heart attack and

what happened afterwards?

PIZZO: I told you, I remember him being in bed.

SIGRIST: But before that . . .

PIZZO: (?) coming . . .

SIGRIST: Before that, do you remember, where was he when he had the heart attack?

PIZZO: He was at home, because, naturally, as I told you, we were on vacation. He was living with my mother, the two of us, and my aunt and uncle.

SIGRIST: So it happened at home, and then, as you say, he had this reaction, the story about him foaming at the mouth. And then tell me a little bit about what happened when he died.

PIZZO: Well, my only recollection is that the next time he was laid out in the coffin, my mother was by the coffin, and we were by my mother. In fact, there should be a picture, Junior might have it, of my father laid out, and my mother and the two of us with him, with her. So he might have it.

SIGRIST: You remember that you were photographed?

PIZZO: Oh, yeah, yeah. I don't know why there's photographs, but my mother looked like hell and, uh, we were there.

SIGRIST: And then, of course, you spoke about your uncle's apartment being decorated with the . . .

PIZZO: Yeah, with the, uh, they, as I said, the front of the house was decorated with the purple and black, and then, of course, where the, where the coffin was. But I, I know there's a picture somewhere. Somebody's got it.

SIGRIST: When, after your father died and your mother made the decision to stay here in the United States, can you tell me a little bit about how your mother went about getting a job.

PIZZO: Well, as I told you, my aunt was all, my mother was a seamstress. My aunt was a seamstress.

SIGRIST: Had she been a seamstress in Italy?

PIZZO: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Yes, she did.

PIZZO: Yeah. And, uh, my aunt was able to get my mother a

job where she was working.

SIGRIST: And what was it, where was it that your aunt was working in the (?).

PIZZO: New York.

SIGRIST: And what was she doing, exactly?

PIZZO: You mean sewing?

SIGRIST: Yes, what was it that she was sewing, and . . .

PIZZO: Dresses. It was a dress house, and they sold ladies dresses.

SIGRIST: And you say a dress house, is that different than a factory?

PIZZO: No, I imagine it was a factory.

SIGRIST: I see.

PIZZO: It might have been called a factory. I called it a dress house.

SIGRIST: Can you tell me a little bit about when your mother first began working, and how she, how she coped with having to do that.

PIZZO: Well, how she did it, I cannot tell you. Remember, I'm a child. Most of these things come to me in retrospect, you know what I mean? Now, she worked, as I said, and we stayed at the nursery during the day. We had our schooling, they had kindergarten, and we had our lunch, and we had what they called supper, bread and milk at four o'clock was our supper. And then when my mother came for us, which was in the neighborhood of seven o'clock, six thirty, seven o'clock, then she would take us home and cook dinner for us and put us to bed.

SIGRIST: Can you talk a little bit about your experiences in the nursery and going to school at that time? What sticks out in your mind about having to be placed in that situation, for you?

PIZZO: Well, as I got older, then I was, uh, enrolled in what we called public school, and I used to go to the public school, go back to the nursery for my lunch, go back to school at three o'clock, come out and go back to the nursery until my mother came for us. Now, this happened until I was old enough to be entrusted with the keys of the house.

SIGRIST: How old were you when that happened?

PIZZO: Well, I would say seven or eight.

SIGRIST: That's the age of responsibility. You get your keys at age seven.

PIZZO: That's it, because yes, I was there until I graduated public school. You usually graduate about, what, eight? Nine? I forget. I forget that. I can't. I can't even attempt.

SIGRIST: How did you go about learning English as a small child?

PIZZO: This is something that amazes me, because my mother couldn't speak English. My father didn't speak English. My aunt, to the day she died she couldn't speak English. Uh, don't ask me how I managed, but I think the nursery, the teachers in the nursery were very kind and very understanding. I think that's when I began to learn English.

SIGRIST: Did your mother attempt to learn English?

PIZZO: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Can you talk a little bit about her attempts at

learning the language?

PIZZO: But this was only later on in life when I was already working, and she went to night school, and she started to learn English, but didn't continue too long because something happened and she could not go to the classes at night any more. But she did try.

SIGRIST: What happened? What got in the way of her being able to, do you remember?

PIZZO: I don't know. It was . . .

SIGRIST: A personal thing? Um, could your mother read and write in Italian?

PIZZO: Definitely.

SIGRIST: She could. And your father obviously had an education, too. Were you allowed to speak English, if you wanted to, in the house?

PIZZO: Oh, of course, of course.

SIGRIST: Did you, as a girl, attempt to help your mother speak the language?

PIZZO: Well, as I told you before, the fact that my mother

worked all day gave me very little opportunity to have conversations with her.

SIGRIST: So she's working even as you're getting older. She's still working at this job.

PIZZO: Right, definitely.

SIGRIST: Uh-huh. Did your mother, did your mother ever regret her decision to stay in the United States?

PIZZO: Never, as far as I know.

SIGRIST: Did she have any interest in becoming an American citizen later on?

PIZZO: Oh, yeah, yeah. That's why she started to learn English. She wanted to. But, as I said, this personal thing got in the way and, of course, that squashed that part of it.

SIGRIST: I see. Did you become a citizen, and how did you go about doing that? How old were you, and what was the process that you went through?

PIZZO: Well, as far as I can remember, I already knew how to speak English.

SIGRIST: So what else did you have to do to become a citizen?

PIZZO: I think I had to attend certain sessions for a period of time, though I can't tell you how long, it wasn't too long. I'd say about six months or so.

SIGRIST: Do you remember how old you were when you were doing this, or what year it was?

PIZZO: I have the papers.

SIGRIST: Well, we can look at those later, too, if you remember it off the top of your head.

PIZZO: Off the top of your head I can't. I think maybe about twenty-three.

SIGRIST: So you were well out of school by that time.

PIZZO: Oh, yeah, yeah.

SIGRIST: Did you get a job when you finished school?

PIZZO: Uh-huh.

SIGRIST: What was the first job that you ever got paid for?

PIZZO: As a bookkeeper. I worked for a firm called Bykoff[ph] and Brown.

SIGRIST: Bykoff[ph] and Brown.

PIZZO: Right. And, uh, it was on Fifth Avenue in New York, near 17th Street, and from then I just kept going on and on.

SIGRIST: Did you, how did you get that job? Do you remember?

PIZZO: Uh, newspaper. I answered an ad.

SIGRIST: And what did you do with the money that you made?

PIZZO: Oh, I turned everything over to my mother. Hey, I made a big fifteen dollars a week. That went to my mother, and she gave me five dollars for my expenses, my lunch, my carfare and stuff.

SIGRIST: Do you remember certain ways that your mother maintained Italian customs and culture in the house when you lived in America? Were there certain ways that she hung on to the ways that they did things in the old country?

PIZZO: Not necessarily. My mother was pretty open minded. I mean, of course, our meals were all on the Italian style. And, uh, I remember I used to have to go to the chicken market and wait until they killed the

chicken before I could bring it home. My mother would never buy chicken that was already cut up. But then at that time they didn't have that much of it. You went to the chicken market.

SIGRIST: Well, and if she liked fresh chickens, that was why she was keeping the chickens on the Veranda in Naples.

PIZZO: Well, that was her husband's family that was doing that.

SIGRIST: I see. But maybe that was one way that she sort of maintained the culture.

PIZZO: It could be.

SIGRIST: Yeah.

PIZZO: It could be.

SIGRIST: You know, we didn't even really, we haven't talked about food at all in this interview. When you were a little girl in Italy, do you remember specifically any foods that you ate as a small girl at that time? So in a fair . . .

PIZZO: Other than the eggs out of the chicken. (they laugh)

SIGRIST: So in America, can you talk about some of the foods that your mother made that were classic Italian meals?

PIZZO: Well, we had pasta.

SIGRIST: Where did she get the pasta?

PIZZO: There was a store that sold pasta, coffee, dried items, no vegetables or anything like that. That's where we got the pasta, the coffee, the dried stuff, beans. Because you never thought of buying canned beans. You made your own beans. In other words, you bought the dry and then cooked, and cooked and cooked and cooked.

SIGRIST: What about, like, what would a typical dinner be in 1925 in your house, say?

PIZZO: Well, we'd have a small antipasto, maybe roasted peppers and, uh, pieces of artichoke, mushrooms, stuff like that.

SIGRIST: And that would be something that you ate typically?

PIZZO: Yeah, as antipasto. And, uh, then you had your pasta dish, and your meat dish, and a vegetable.

SIGRIST: Now, were you and your sister responsible for doing any of the cooking?

PIZZO: Oh, yeah, for a long time, when my mother, as I told you, my mother worked all day. As I got older, I had to take on the cooking, so I'd come home from school, shop if I needed anything, come home and do the cooking, and be ready for my mother when she came home at seven o'clock or so.

SIGRIST: I see. So you and your sister were responsible for part of the running of the household.

PIZZO: Right, right.

SIGRIST: How many years did your mother work?

PIZZO: Oh, my mother worked until she . . .

SIGRIST: She worked a long time.

PIZZO: She was in her eighties when she stopped.

SIGRIST: She was still working . . .

PIZZO: Because she couldn't, she wouldn't stop.

SIGRIST: Did your mother ever express any interest of going back to Italy even for a visit?

PIZZO: No.

SIGRIST: What about you? Have you ever gone?

PIZZO: Wait a minute. Once she did. But we didn't have any money, honey. So how do you get to Italy without money?

SIGRIST: What about you? Have you ever gone back to Italy?

PIZZO: Oh, yeah, I've been back two or three times.

SIGRIST: What was the first time? Do you remember what year it was the first time you went back?

PIZZO: (she pauses) Yeah. I think it was in '63.

SIGRIST: 1963.

PIZZO: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Did you go to Naples?

PIZZO: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Can you tell me how you felt inside when you were in Naples? Did it have some kind of a connection to you, or . . .

PIZZO: Not really. I mean, I can't say that it moved me that much. I was glad to see the city, and the house where I was born, but other than that I just enjoyed it as a tourist.

SIGRIST: Were there any relatives still, still around at that time, that you visited with?

PIZZO: A very distant cousin, and I never even remember my mother talking about him.

SIGRIST: The cousin.

PIZZO: Yeah. But, uh, well . . .

SIGRIST: But you met him when you went over there.

PIZZO: Yeah. And, uh, we corresponded for a short time. But other than that there was nothing else.

SIGRIST: We have just a couple of minutes left, and I want to get some family information in here. What year did you get married?

PIZZO: I got married in '47.

SIGRIST: 1947. And what was the name of the man that you married?

PIZZO: Nicholas Pizzo.

SIGRIST: And where was he from?

PIZZO: He was from Sicily.

SIGRIST: Born in Sicily? Yes. And, uh, did you have children?

PIZZO: No, I did not, but he had children.

SIGRIST: He had children.

PIZZO: From a previous marriage.

SIGRIST: I see. Did he go with you in 1963 back to Italy?

PIZZO: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Uh-huh. Did you go to Sicily, too?

PIZZO: Uh-huh.

SIGRIST: Um, when you think of yourself in terms of nationality, do you think of yourself as being Italian, as being American? How do you think of yourself in terms of nationality?

PIZZO: I don't think I've ever given it much thought. I consider myself an American as far as my habits are concerned. But I'm still proud of being Italian.

SIGRIST: How do you think your life would have been different if you had never come over to America and you had grown up in Naples? How would things have been different for you?

PIZZO: How can I tell you? How can I answer that? I haven't the slightest conception.

SIGRIST: What have you done in your life that you're the most proud of?

PIZZO: That I'm most proud of?

SIGRIST: Most proud of.

PIZZO: I don't know. I tried to be good. I tried to be honest. I don't know.

SIGRIST: All the tough questions come at the end, so. (he laughs) Well, I think that's probably a good place for us to stop. I want to thank you very much. You have a very good memory.

PIZZO: Well, as I said, you can, as I said to someone, you'll remember something that happened years ago, and you forget what you had for breakfast. But, uh, these things came to me, well . . .

EI-883/PIZZO

SIGRIST: This is Paul Sigrist signing off with Angelina Pizzo
on Thursday, May 15, 1997, in Linden, New Jersey.
Thank you very much.